

SOUTHWORDS

MAINE TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL SOUTH

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As the election approaches, students share opinions on everything from news consumption to presidential candidates.

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NEWS in BRIEF

National Merit Semifinalists recognized for PSAT score

Charlotte Chapman

News Editor

Recently, seniors Samara Lefler and Thomas Hurley were recognized as semifinalists by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation for their PSAT performance in 2023. Semi-finalists have scores in the top 16,000 test takers, and Lefler and Hurley achieved this status. Less than 1% of test takers reach this qualification.

Thirteen additional seniors earned commendation status, which means they have scores in the top 50,000 of test takers. These students are Alexander Babich, Sydney Fraley, Eliza Goldwasser, Evelyn Kellogg, Irene Kostov, Kayla Krawczynski, Reed Kuczura, James Macdougall, Katerina Markova, Victoria Stott, Laith Tannous, Caitlin Vengazo and Jake Zabratanski.

"We were officially notified that we made semi-finalist in the middle of September, about a year after the test," Lefler said. "I was a little bit surprised—I had forgotten about it since it had been so long."

Now, Lefler and Hurley are able to apply for the finalist level, which includes various scholarship opportunities. Lefler and Hurley will learn if they qualify as finalists in early February.

New gold-out theme against pediatric cancer

Jennifer Antonov

News Writer

Near the end of the football season, the student section introduced a new theme for the first game in October: gold-out. This theme was chosen in support of pediatric cancer.

"Pediatric cancer can be a devastating diagnosis," senior Hawk Nation officer Julia Van Roeyen said. "It's important to show that we, as a community, are able to come together and support those who need it."

Traditionally, the first game in October is a pink-out theme in support of breast-cancer awareness. However, this theme was pushed back to Oct. 18.

"Pink-out is an essential theme that our school carries throughout the month of October over several of our fall sports," Van Roeyen said. "Volleyball has already had their pink out game, and football's pink out is saved for Senior Night."

Hawk Nation plans to keep both traditions going forward.

"I hope that this [gold-out] theme continues over to the future years, and that we continue to help with Cal's Angels to make a difference," Van Roeyen said.

Dunkin' raffle prizes encourage good behavior

Joseph Calderon & Luciana Cegielski

News Editor & News Writer

Two new programs were recently introduced by Maine South to incentivize higher rates of attendance and Hawk PRIDE behavior.

The first of the programs rewards students who have good attendance with a raffle for Dunkin' gift cards. The second program allows teachers to recognize students who exemplify Hawk PRIDE characteristics, also rewarding them with Dunkin' gift cards.

"Students that have been in school with no tardies for the preceding five days are eligible to win," Associate Principal of Student Experiences Mr. Michael Edwards said. "So then, we take the group of students who qualify and we randomly select five winners twice a week."

"Dunkin' reached out to us and they were offering an incentive program for students in high school," Mr. Edwards said.

Past issues with attendance prompted Maine South to move forward with the offer.

The attendance raffles are held every Tuesday and Thursday and will continue for the first semester. The raffles are also planned to continue next semester, possibly with a different incentive.

Classes pilot new attendance scanning system

Samara Lefler

News Editor

A pilot for scanning into classes started on Sept. 5 in four classrooms: A117, A120, A304, and A319. These classrooms now have scanners, which students use as they enter class. The scanners automatically mark them as present or tardy, and without scanning in, students are marked absent.

The policy aims to save teachers time and increase the timeliness and accuracy of attendance reporting.

"It takes some of the pressure off of the teacher to have to go back to attendance or even take time at the beginning of class to take attendance," Associate Principal of Student and Family Services, Ms. Kyleen Coia said.

There was another pilot that started at Maine East last year, which has seen success.

"They saw an increase in timeliness because of the scanning in," Ms. Coia said.

Due to Maine East's success, the pilot expanded district-wide. The teachers involved are supportive of the policy, despite the learning curve

that came with it.

"It was a little bit rocky at the start, just because people weren't used to it, and I wasn't used to it, and they were trying to figure out the technology, but it's definitely better now," math teacher Ms. Victoria O'Malley said. "Most students are in a routine and they're just used to scanning in, so things are definitely better than they were when we were first launching it."

Students in these classes have noticed new interruptions to class with the addition of the scanners.

"It is slightly distracting in Physics when people come in late and they have to scan because it's very loud," senior Kalyana Gollahalli said.

They pilot has allowed administration to identify problems before the policy expands school-wide, such as issues with scanning in for the first class of the day.

"It's a bit of an inconvenience in the morning because you can't scan in until seven minutes before the class starts," Gollahalli said.

There is also not a lot of room for error, as the scanners operate exactly by the bell.

"It's really unforgiving," Ms. O'Malley said. "If a kid is like 10 seconds late, they're marked tardy."

While some issues are still being fixed, the scanners have helped the classes they are in.

"It saves a little bit of class time because everybody takes care of it ahead of time," Ms. O'Malley said. "It's just when someone comes in with a pass or when kids forget to scan in [that I have to update attendance] but I would have always had to do those kinds of things anyway."

Provided the pilot continues to go well, the district plans to expand school-wide in the three Maine schools.

"[Implementing the policy school-wide] is in consideration for next year," Ms. Coia said. "There's a lot that goes into a setup like this, including scanners in every single classroom, computers in every single classroom, training teachers, and making sure that we have fixed any of the bugs that we know exist because technology is technology, and sometimes there are little things that are off."



SCAN'D BY ME Scanners and iPads like these sit near the classroom door in A117, A120, A304, and A319. The scanners work the same as the ones by the building entry doors, but they mark students' attendance as well.

South's color guard returns for first full season

Joseph Calderon

News Editor

The color guard, known for its vibrant colors, music, and flag performing, was reestablished last winter after about a 14-year hiatus. This is the first fall season for the team, and they have been staying active.

"We perform at halftime for the sophomore football game right before varsity," Coach Connie Rogers said. "We also had two performances with the girls' flag football team, and then we performed at the Memorial Day Parade."

Unfortunately, the color guard is currently unable to perform at the Varsity games.

"Right now, we're not collaborating with the band," Ms. Rogers said. "We're hopeful that in the future we will be able to, because historically, color guards are part of the band entity, but as of now, we're functioning as an independent group."

Still, the color guard has been working to expand and continue honing their skills.

"We practice once a week, on Mondays, from 3:30 to 5:00," sophomore team captain Eden Huston said. "We're usually in the commons."

As a team captain, Huston is responsible for the team's choreography. In addition to that, she maintains morale, records attendance, and recruits new members. The team saw an increase in membership this year by eight members. This brings them up from the 11 original participants to 19 this year.

In addition to their performances, the color



FLAGS AND FOOTBALL Color guard members performed at the sophomore football game on Oct. 18. They also have performed at flag football games and the Memorial Day parade.

guard is also known for their fundraisers. Their Nothing Bundt Cakes event proved to be a great success.

"They only brought about 300 Bundtlets and sold out before C-lunch last year," Ms. Rogers said. "So in September, they brought 600 and sold out again. The

last Bundtlet sale was about 700 Bundtlets."

The bundt cakes will continue to be sold every first Friday of the month. The funds were used to buy the team uniforms, performance flags, and warmup jackets. Coach Rogers hopes to use future funds to hire a professional choreographer for routines.

KIVA club aims to connect students with the world

Bart Dabkowski

News Writer

KIVA, a new club at Maine South, focuses on helping low-income communities around the world. The KIVA club at South is a chapter of a larger, national organization that provides microfinance loans to underserved communities. KIVA chapters raise funds to provide loans to these communities.

"KIVA chooses partners with fair, non-predatory lending practices and focuses on social good," senior club president Anam Fatima said. "Our club focuses on raising awareness about microfinance and encouraging student involvement."

The KIVA national organization has existed since 2005; however, Fatima brought a chapter to South for the first time this year.

"I was inspired to bring KIVA to Maine South because I believe in empowering people through financial support," Fatima said. "Everyone deserves a chance to succeed, and KIVA provides a unique opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives



LOANING LEGENDS Students gathered in A111 to discuss a Crumbl Cookie Fundraiser and future events. This was KIVA's third meeting this year and they have already created a tight-knit community of students.

of individuals worldwide. I wanted to create a space where students could learn about global issues and contribute positively."

This global aspect of the club provides a unique experience for students.

"The goal of KIVA is to help students connect with entrepreneurs around the world, to see how they live and what they need to become

successful business people in different parts of the world," club sponsor Mr. Benjamin Reiff said. "I think the mission of KIVA very much aligns with our World Cultures course."

Many club members are ready to fulfill these club goals and to help support these communities financially.

"I was motivated to join KIVA because I wanted to give back to people in need and learn more about how

the program helps individuals with their matters," senior Nina Turk said. "I enjoyed voting on who we should help first because the leaders made it a fun competition to see who promoted the best."

KIVA hopes to organize events that fundraise money and raise awareness about issues facing disadvantaged communities.

"We plan to organize activities such as bake sales, fundraising events, and collaborations with other clubs and schools to raise funds," Fatima said. "The KIVA club will engage in activities like organizing educational workshops, hosting guest speakers, and participating in community service projects that align with our mission. We'll regularly review KIVA loans as a group and discuss the impact of our contributions."

Club leaders are eager to grow the club, reaching more students over time.

"More than 20 students attended our first meeting, and we're excited to keep growing and welcome more students who are passionate about making a difference," Fatima said.

Union contract extended; snow days return to 207

Charlotte Chapman

News Editor

On Oct. 21, the 207 Education Association approved a two-year extension to their contract with the district.

This extension includes several amendments to the original contract, which was passed in 2020, ranging from adjusted insurance costs to new teacher assistant conditions. One of the most significant changes impacting students will be the updated emergency day policy.

Under the previous contract language, 207 tested its first "remote learning" days since the COVID-19 pandemic. The district attempted to hold a remote learning day on Jan. 12, 2024, due to predicted snowfall. However, since many lost power, school was ultimately canceled completely. Four days later, on Jan. 16, remote learning was implemented due to extreme temperatures.

With the amended contract, remote learning will not be necessary for the first five emergency days of a school year.

"The first time this year that school is closed because of an emergency will not be a remote learning day," 207 Education Association President Ms. Julia Heyden said. "It will be an emergency day and there won't be school. That can happen up to five times unless the state law changes."

The updated contract language states that if school is closed for over five days, then remote learning options may need to be implemented.

"It would not be accurate to say that there's no possibility of remote learning options," Ms. Heyden said. "If we go beyond the five built-in days, then there are two choices: extend the school year or have a remote learning day."

This amendment aims to provide more flexibility when fulfilling the required number of 185 school days per year.

In addition to the emergency day policy changes, the extension also updated contract elements such as the role of the district's Innovation Committee, retirement plans for staff, and insurance benefits.

"These changes may not be noticeable to students, but if it makes teachers happier, students will benefit from that," Ms. Heyden said.



PRESIDENTIAL PORTRAYAL Senior Alessandro Allegrini represents President Trump in the first round of the mock debate on Oct. 29. Students explained their candidate's policy positions while following a pre-written script.

SSHS runs mock presidential debate

Charlotte Chapman

News Editor

For the first time, the Social Science Honor Society (SSHS) organized mock presidential debates, held on Oct. 29 and 30. With the upcoming election, students had the ability to learn more about each candidate's policies.

"We tried to make the debate focused on policies, not personalities," SSHS sponsor Ms. Sherri Scorza said.

This debate aimed to educate students on the election beyond what is shown on social media, ensuring they become educated voters.

"As someone who recently turned 18 and voted in the presidential election, participating in this debate felt especially relevant to me," senior Molly Heneghan, who represented Vice President Harris, said.

To ensure the debate centered around policy, the questions and answers were scripted ahead of time by SSHS members.

"The students who wrote the scripts did a really nice job portraying the characteristics of the two candidates," senior Maeve Strotman, who represented President Trump, said.

SSHS members had the ability to participate through writing material or presenting roles.

"What's so cool about the debate is how many students have gotten involved," Ms. Scorza said. "It was all them, between writing the questions and answers and presenting."

The experience provided many students with the opportunity to speak in front of peers.

"I wanted to represent a candidate so I could practice my debate and public speaking skills," senior Alessandro Allegrini, who represented President Trump, said.

In addition to representing candidates, students could also choose to act as moderators of the debate.

"I chose to be a moderator because I wanted to be in a position to lead a discussion without getting bogged down by politics," senior Ryan Schoenstedt said.

During the debates, up to four students represented each candidate at a time. There were around 12 policy topics scripted, ranging from economic programs to foreign affairs stances. Two moderators were responsible for guiding the conversation from topic to topic, ensuring each candidate answered the questions.

"I would say the debate was very educational," Allegrini said. "It was very interesting to hear both candidate's opinions."



EDITORIAL CARTOON BY ANASTASIA MUSYAKEVICH



STAFF EDITORIAL

Political tension makes discussion uncomfortable

The approaching election has captured national attention in a seemingly unprecedented way. National news programs have labeled this "the most consequential election of our times," yet, for some reason, the stakes don't seem as high among students.

Teenagers generally prefer not to talk about politics casually, and they're even less likely to prioritize their civic duties. There are certainly exceptions, but the overall statistics are stark: voter turnout has been lowest for the 18- to 29-year-old age group in at least the nine most recent elections.

They are also by far the group most affected by the growing presence of social media. The reach of apps such as TikTok and Instagram has skyrocketed, and high schoolers lead the charge.

Considering the unprecedented access to communication and information in the digital age, a majority of young people's engagement in politics in the real world is surprisingly lackluster.

So, with an apparent increase of concern for the political climate on social media, why do young people not seem to have the same concern in the halls or at the polls?

The earliest and most impactful time that students discuss politics is

usually at home with their families. In fact, 86.6% of respondents to a voluntary email survey of 217 students conducted by *Southwords* reported that their views were affected by family members.

Outside of the home, political conversation is often suppressed and considered improper. In high school, it rarely occurs outside of heavily structured conversations within government classes, and even then, students mostly speak in vague terms and are often afraid to be the "odd one out" for showing a political leaning.

► MATTER OF OPINION

Students reveal what really matters to them in the upcoming election.

See pages 8-9

Just because students aren't often openly talking about politics, it doesn't mean they don't care. Nearly half of survey respondents rated their interest in a politics at least a 4 out of 5, with 5 being "very interested" and 1 being "not interested."

Because in-person political conversation looms as an intimidating taboo, teenagers are increasingly turning to their phones to satisfy this interest.

It's easy for short-form videos, AI-generated photos, and quotes

lacking context to gain traction on social media. Without the full picture, impressionable teenagers don't know what to believe, and aren't always getting the truth.

Misinformation is often motivated by hate-filled arguments that can ultimately disenfranchise teen voters.

This issue affects more than just the digital world. It can make real-life political interactions feel uncomfortable and confrontational, when more often than not, they could simply be a respectful exchange of perspectives.

Because politics have become so sensationalized and divisive, people are simultaneously convinced that they have to feel strongly about something to have a valid opinion, and that opinions are so rigid and unmovable that it's not worth risking one's dignity to debate ideas.

In reality, political discussion is entirely capable of being an eye-opening, life-changing experience.

If students make the extra effort to have healthy political conversations with people who have differing opinions, seek out accurate and unbiased information, and get comfortable with speaking about politics with their friends, we can take a step towards finally repairing the toxic political climate.

SOUTHWORDS

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Southwords is a student-run publication designed as a public forum for student opinion and balanced reporting on topics relevant to the Maine South community.

Unsigned staff editorials represent the consensus opinion of the *Southwords* Editorial Board. Personal commentaries represent the opinion of the author alone and do not represent the opinions of the publication nor District 207.

Student participation in the newspaper, whether through readership, submitting articles, or voicing comments or concerns, is encouraged.

Signed letters to the editor can be given to a member of the editorial staff or e-mailed to southwords@maine207.org. *Southwords* reserves the right to edit material for clarity and brevity and to reject obscene/libelous submissions.

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Competing fundraisers reduce returns for clubs



Eliza Goldwasser
Commentary Editor

There are only so many World's Finest Chocolate bars one can eat before their charitable inclinations (and money) diminish. A couple of months into every school year, it feels as though there's an ambush of fundraisers, be it popsicles or candy bars.

While providing space for all clubs and organizations to raise money is necessary, having too many fundraisers at once is counterproductive.

For example, last year, Tea Club—which I am president of—spent weeks planning a fundraiser selling chai tea lattes at lunch. We selected the date of our fundraiser well in advance and distributed promotional materials

across the school in the weeks before.

When we got to school that day, we were dismayed to find out that Irish Club was also having a fundraiser. They were selling green river floats, another type of drink. So, in the same lunch block, there were two beverage-based fundraisers happening at the same time.

All of the hard work we put into coordinating our fundraiser felt diminished. While it was a success, we were left wondering how much more successful it could have been had there not been another similar fundraiser happening at the same time.

This error was not the fault of either club, but rather the mechanism through which fundraisers are approved.

Another barrier to successful fundraising is the cycle of chocolate sales. It feels as though there are chocolate droughts throughout the year when nothing is being sold, and then, all



of a sudden, eight different clubs are all carrying around cardboard briefcases.

Students quickly become disinterested in the chocolate being sold, and if kids are unable to sell all of their bars, they are responsible for paying the difference. This makes the process of fundraising less productive and less enjoyable for students.

Maine South is capable of mak-

ing the fundraising process more efficient and thoughtfully planned. There should be a calendar created that clearly lays out which clubs and organizations are holding their fundraisers on which days.

Groups wanting to fundraise should also help to make the procedure more effective. They should determine well in advance which days they wish to raise money and communicate their needs and dates to the administration weeks before they plan to fundraise. There should also be measures put in place to ensure concurrent fundraisers occur as little as possible.

Fundraising is an important tool that allows Maine South to have such a vibrant and diverse assortment of clubs and organizations. In order to ensure the success of all fundraisers, clubs and administrators need to work together to develop better systems when raising money.

Hawk pride is overshadowed by embarrassment



Lola Cosima
Commentary Writer

There are 30 seconds remaining on the clock. Loyola is up by three. It's fourth down for the Hawks. The quarterback launches the ball down the field and it lands in the wide receiver's arms. He sprints down the field toward the end zone with a linebacker right on his heels. Touchdown Hawks!

The players run together, cheering for joy. But when they look over at the student section, it's nearly empty. Unfortunately, this is just one illustration of what has been happening at the sporting events during the past couple of years at Maine South.

The excuses are endless: students are tired, bored, busy, etc. So they leave, taking the energy and excitement of the games with them.

Even at the start of the games, the students section is low in spirit, lacking in excitement, and just weak overall.

In the example described above, wouldn't you have loved to be there with a packed student section, yelling, cheering, and rushing the field?

I know I would. As Maine South Hawks, we should all be participating in school spirit.

From award-winning school plays, to our dynamic Hawkettes, to all of our athletic teams, Maine South students prepare and practice extremely hard to represent our school.

We need to show up for each other. Maine South has activities that go on all day, every day on campus, and we as students need to demonstrate our pride and support for their efforts and accomplishments, win or lose.

In addition to performances and games, there are simple ways to show support for the school in our daily activities. One of these ways is participating in spirit days.

It seems that less than half of the student body participates in spirit days, and the majority of those who do are seniors.

Two of the major contributing factors to the lack of participation in spirit days are "bad themes" and embarrassment. The Student Council works hard to come up with new themes and ideas for spirit days so it doesn't end up being repetitive; however, many students make the excuse that the themes are "lame" and choose to not participate.

One solution to increasing spirit participation could be sending out Google forms asking students to



NOT A CROWD PLEASER The Hawk Nest dwindled as the Oct. 18 football game against Deerfield progressed. Unlike the student sections of the past, this one seems barren and lacking spirit.

choose themes that they would like to see throughout the school year, whether it be homecoming or winter break.

This would allow students' voices to be heard and create a wide range of ideas to ultimately choose from.

Another reason students aren't participating is the embarrassment factor. I know that many students tend to opt out of spirit days because they know the rest of their grade isn't going to participate.

This ends up becoming a vicious circle because fewer students participate when there already aren't a lot of students participating, and the cycle repeats.

If we as a student body can come together and all participate at once, participation will rapidly increase

and then the people who will end up feeling embarrassed are the ones not participating.

When you really think about it, dressing in red, white, and blue or wearing pajamas isn't embarrassing—it's actually fun.

High school only lasts for four years. We have to make the most of every opportunity we get to have fun and make memories. Participation in school activities, games, and spirit days is a way to make high school more enjoyable for not only you, but also the actors on stage or the players on Wilson Field.

So next time a spirit day is coming up or a sporting event is happening, dress in theme and go to the game. You go to one of the best high schools in the state; act like it.

True crime genre romanticizes heinous acts



Sarah Frantz
Commentary Writer

Fascination with the dark and gory has always been prominent in human culture. The human brain is hardwired to find intrigue in morbid events.

This is all the clearly apparent with the success of "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story" on Netflix.

True crime stories such as this can now be accessed in numerous ways, with new podcasts, documentaries, and books coming out frequently.

Increasingly, true crime shows and movies "recreating" the events of these lurid stories are also coming out, most of which are somewhat problematic.

The recent show about the Menendez brothers is the perfect example of the glamorization of criminals.

For those who may not know the story, the Menendez brothers were allegedly abused and sexually assaulted by their father with their mother being aware of it.

In response, the brothers brutally murdered their parents in their Beverly Hills home.

One reason the show is so controversial is due to the director, Ryan Murphy.

He not only romanticized the relationship the brothers had with each other but also the charac-

ters themselves, using heartthrob actor Nicholas Alexander Chavez to portray Lyle when they don't look remotely similar.

This creates more of an issue because people are more focused on how the actors look than the crimes committed, making it easier to sympathize with the brothers.

Another reason the show is problematic is its inaccuracy, such as the implied intimate relationship between the brothers.

Erik Menendez, one of the brothers, spoke out about the issue, stating that the incestuous relationship portrayed was a "blatant lie."

Robert Rand, an expert in the case and author of "The Menendez Murders: The Shocking Untold Story of the Menendez Family and the Killings That Stunned the Nation," claims that the brothers were

► **MENENDEZ MAYHEM** Despite its controversial nature, the new Netflix series has viewers on the edge of their seats.

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never lovers, and if any actions that may suggest otherwise did occur, it was most likely a response to the trauma.

More problems arise with the storytelling in the show, as the Menendez brothers' family called the show "a phobic, gross, anachronistic, serial episodic nightmare."

They argued that Murphy relied on the debunked theories of investigative reporter Dominick Dunne, neither of whom spoke to the family.

Dunne was biased about the case, claiming that the brothers were never molested before the trials had ever begun, and had a history of siding with

the prosecution no matter the case.

Another installment of the "Monsters" series was dedicated to Jeffrey Dahmer with similar problems arising.

Much like the season dedicated to the Menendez brothers, the family members of the victims were never contacted about the show.

True crime reporter Anne E. Schwartz claimed the show took artistic liberties and that most of the facts of these cases were either fabricated or deemed inaccurate.

However, not every true crime story is as unrealistic as the ones made by Ryan Murphy.

For example, "The Act" about Gypsy Rose Blanchard is mostly accurate according to Screenrant and Time Magazine.

While the show does take some creative liberties, they do not change the big picture or any important details about her life and treatment.

Still, Blanchard was not consulted about the movie or compensated.

If we are to make movies about real people, especially movies about someone who was murdered or has committed homicide, producers need to communicate with the families of victims and the people that are being portrayed.

It is important to get an accurate representation because these topics are so sensitive, and the film industry needs to be more empathetic to what these people have experienced.

Yes, it is understandable for some dramatization to occur, but blatant lies and disregard for the impact on the people involved are not acceptable.

When these lies and over-dramatizations happen, it humanizes the criminals, glamorizing crime and the people who commit them.

Erase your expectations to truly live in the moment



Caitlin Vengazo
Editor-in-Chief

From school dances to getting a driver's license to graduation, high school is full of milestones.

For most, these are defining high school experiences that we look forward to for months or even years. However, sometimes when we anticipate something for so long—expecting every homecoming to be better than the year before and comparing our experiences to other groups or grades ahead of us—pressure on that event creates unattainable expectations that prime us for disappointment.

It's not enough to have a fun time; for us to remember something fondly, it has to be more fun than any of the others.

When things don't go exactly as planned, the event we were so excited about feels ruined, and, suddenly, all we remember is the negative aspects.

This attitude was noticeably concerning, particularly among seniors, around this year's homecoming.

Homecoming anticipation starts to build weeks before the actual dance. Buying formal wear, coordinating a day and night's worth of festivities, and centering nearly every conversation around it all contribute to high expectations, especially for seniors who want to cherish their last one.

Having already attended three homecomings, it felt like we were all expecting this year's to be the best one yet. As our last homecoming, it had to be, right?

This is simply not true, and mindsets like this prevent us from enjoying ourselves at all. When our spectrums of satisfaction are based on expectations, past experiences, or other people, we are setting ourselves up for disappointment.

Instead of building ideas up in our heads of how something will play out, we should go into special occasions with open minds.

I'm not saying we should lower our standards of what is considered enjoyable, but let's acknowledge that there isn't one definition of what brings us joy. There are a multitude of ways to have fun, even

those we might not necessarily expect.

To that point, I'd argue that we make the best memories when we least expect to. Without expectations and pressure to have the best experience ever, there are limitless possibilities to have a good time.

Additionally, we need to recognize that there aren't a defined number of opportunities to make fun memories. In four years of high school, we have four birthdays, four homecomings, two proms, hundreds of weekends, four years worth of winter/Thanksgiving/spring breaks, countless "lasts," and so much more.

Besides, high school isn't forever, and there's plenty more to come after these four years and beyond. Chances are we won't remember a less-than-perfect school dance 10 years from now.

There are so many milestones this year that I want to make the most of, but if that involves setting my expectations so high that I'm doomed for a letdown, then I'm not going to have a positive experience whatsoever.

It's time we let go of expectations and comparisons and open ourselves up to the idea that our best memory is always ahead of us.

Where We Stand

Southwords surveys students about their political thoughts and behaviors.

Despite unprecedented media attention, the upcoming election has not engaged all students.

Although some students are preparing to cast their ballot, the majority aren't eligible yet. Out of 214 respondents to the voluntary email survey conducted by *Southwords*, only 10 reported that they would be able to vote by Election Day.

The age requirement leaves many high schoolers feeling disconnected from the political climate.

"I do care about who wins, but because I can't vote, there's not really much I can do to change it," senior Jake Eckhart said.

Whether or not they're eligible can have a notable impact on how much political media students view.

"Since I'm not going to be able to vote, I haven't really been paying attention to it that much," senior Alex Dolubizno said.

Still, the outcome interests many students.

"The president is a symbol of our country, so who that person is matters," senior Sydney Fraley said. "Young voters often think their vote doesn't matter or won't make a difference, but it does."

Often, the level of political interest that a student

demonstrates is strongly linked to their families.

"Politics are important to me because of how I grew up," senior Kasia Szul said. "I formed my opinions based on my parents, so it's stuck with me."

While being politically cohesive with family can be beneficial, some students find it to be limiting.

"I wish we had more political discourse in school," senior Jaden Clarke said, "because a lot of us blindly follow the opinions of our parents. If we had more political outlets within the school system, that would help people form their own opinions, which would help us move our country away from radicalizing based on wedge issues and taught beliefs."

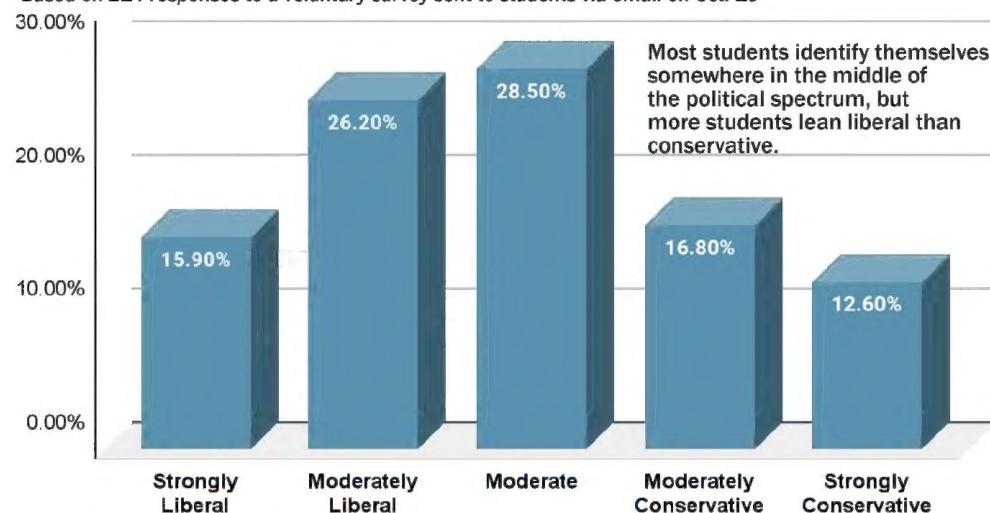
Besides family members, TV and social media were the sources reported to be most influential on students' political views. Because of the prevalence of digital media, many students have concerns.

"It's really hard to tell if the person you're following is a respectable source or not," junior Charles Rzany said. "Misinformation is more prevalent than ever. If you want to get what the news actually is, you need to go out of your way."

Students also often doubt the media's intentions.

How students describe their political beliefs

*Based on 214 responses to a voluntary survey sent to students via email on Oct. 10



Which news source students trust the most

The most trusted news sources by students are Fox and CNN, considered by Ad Fontes Media to contain more variability in reliability than other major sources.



Thomas Hurley
Editor-in-Chief

"I feel like the media wants to divide its consumers," Dolubizno said.

Emotional tactics can also impact reporting.

"They seem to guilt people into taking certain stances," Eckhart said. "Sometimes they'll take religion or personal stories and use them to force people to feel connected to an issue."

Although news sources can often be politically motivated, most students avoid strictly adhering to one political stance. Only 28.5% of respondents said they are "strongly" liberal or conservative.

"I like to stay out of choosing a specific side because I know both are more wrong than right in most cases," senior Natalie Causevic said.

This can lead to students feeling like they have to support a candidate they don't entirely agree with.

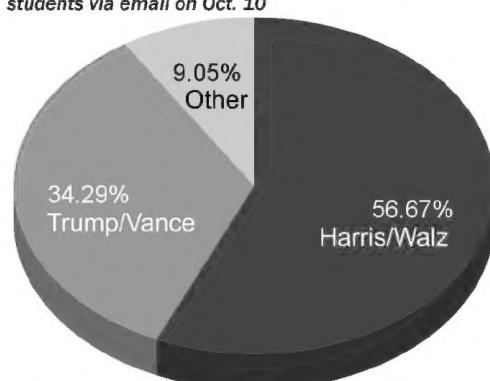
"I feel like, if you're in the middle, you just pick the side that you align most with," Dolubizno said.

Despite apprehension for the media and political parties, there is also a sense of determination among many young and future voters.

"Our demographic is the deciding factor if we all were to vote," Dolubizno said.

Who students would vote for in the presidential election

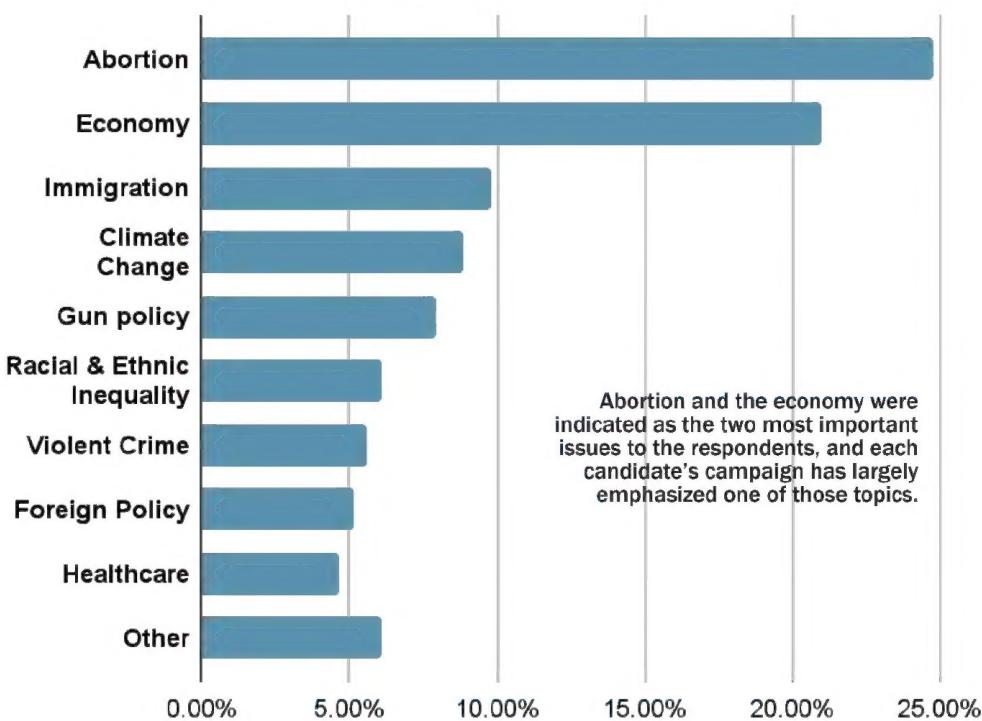
*Based on 210 responses to a voluntary survey sent to students via email on Oct. 10



A majority of respondents choosing Harris and Walz is reflective of students' overall liberal political leaning.

The most important issue to students in the upcoming election

*Based on 214 responses to a voluntary survey sent to students via email on Oct. 10

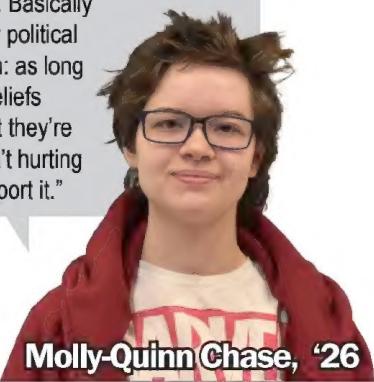


"I think it's important for women to make their own decisions, because if something were to happen to me, I'd want to have that choice."



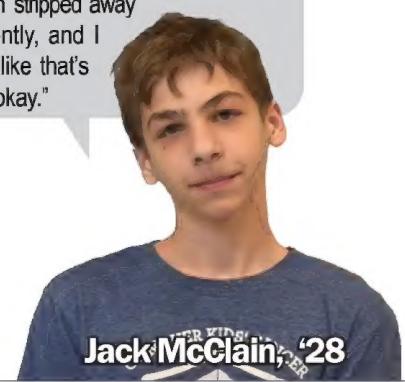
Claire Magad, '28

"I really value belonging and trust and love. Basically that's my political spectrum: as long as the beliefs and what they're doing isn't hurting you, support it."



Molly-Quinn Chase, '26

"LGBTQ+ rights are important because I know they have kind of been stripped away recently, and I feel like that's not okay."



Jack McClain, '28

"Issues outside the United States, like the Russia-Ukraine War and the Israel conflict, are most important. If there's issues with other countries, it can impact our economy."



Brennan Dolan, '26

Election judges promote civic participation

Nora Lakin

Features Writer

As the presidential election looms, students are finding new ways to fulfill their civic duties. Students—even those under 18—are able to work polling places serving as Student Election Judges.

On election day, judges arrive at 5:00 a.m. at their assigned polling place to set up. They expedite the voting process by checking in and registering voters, processing ballots, and ensuring information gets to the right place. Students who undergo this training gain a unique perspective and receive generous compensation for their time.

Senior Sydney Cruz served as an election judge in the spring primaries and was financially motivated to take the position.

"Honestly, I think the biggest appeal is the money," Cruz said. "They pay you \$250 just to be an election judge for the day."

Other students, however, see it from a different lens. Senior Tiffany Wu was prompted to become an election judge to learn more about election day.

"I knew that I would be able to vote in the next election, so I wanted to experience what the process was firsthand," Wu said. "Being an election judge made me more likely to vote in future elections."

An additional effect of being an election judge is a change in students' outlooks on the voting process. Ms. Sherri Scorza, the government teacher helping to assist interested students, reflects on stories she has heard over the years.

"I've had so many students talk about how they used to go with their parents and watch them vote and just see that from an early age," Ms. Scorza said. "This is the next step towards being involved with it."

Although students see the importance of the voting process, they also note the downsides, especially how much time the entire process takes up.

"You have to be there at 5 a.m. to get everything ready, and you can be there until almost 8 p.m." Cruz said. "It's a long day."

Additionally, all election judges—no matter if they are students or not—must complete extensive unpaid training in order to prepare for election day. When election day finally comes, judges carry heavy responsibility as figures of authority in the polling place, which can be stressful.

"One of my friends found the training so overwhelming that she ended up quitting," Cruz said.

Ms. Scorza has also noticed some disadvantages to the job that she feels may push particularly busy students away from working an election.

"We've had fewer students getting involved because of how much time it takes up," Ms. Scorza said. "It's such a busy time for them, whether they are using that day to look at colleges, getting caught up on homework, or involved in other activities like fine arts."

Ultimately, participants are satisfied to be fulfilling their civic duties in this way.

"It definitely encourages students to vote because they know what's going on and can hopefully participate in future elections," Cruz said.

The man behind the scan

'Papa Roach' connects with students through role as security guard

Madeline Welke &
Emma Millitaru

Features Writers

Mr. Michael Roach, affectionately referred to as Papa Roach, is a security guard known for his positive attitude, friendly demeanor, and kindness towards the school community. Students see him stationed throughout the school, most often at the Jock Lot and PA Wing security desks. He is always up to chat and never fails to have a smile on his face. This year, he became increasingly recognized for passing out combs each morning.

Mr. Roach grew up around Chicago and characterized his childhood as fun and carefree. He spent most of his time outside of school hanging out with his friends.

"It was a wonderful time to be a teenager," Mr. Roach said. "It was just good, clean fun."

For most of his life, Mr. Roach worked as a police officer. Before that, he was a military enlistee who fought in the Vietnam War.

"I entered the military at age 17," he said. "I loved military life, but after I came back from Vietnam, I decided not to continue on with the military."

After returning from service, Mr. Roach became the head of the canine training program for the Chicago police department.

"I trained dogs and spent 10 years

working for the Anti-Cruelty Society, and from there, I ended up in Texas," Mr. Roach said.

Soon after returning from Texas, Mr. Roach was offered a position working as a security guard at Stagg High School. He found himself surrounded by youth—a new experience for him.

"My daughter, who is a teacher at Stagg High School, asked me if I still felt like working," Mr. Roach said. "I said yes, and she said they needed a security guard at the school. I applied for the job and they gave it to me."

While working at Stagg, "Security Guard Roach" became "Papa Roach."

"Papa Roach is the name of a popular rock band," Mr. Roach said. "Because my last name is Roach, the principal liked the Papa Roach music and he tagged me with Papa Roach."

The name stuck. When Mr. Roach started working at Maine South, he would get asked his name. Without hesitation, "Papa Roach" was always the answer.

While working as a security guard, Mr. Roach always tries to promote respect and kindness. He loves being around students to spread positivity.

"My favorite part of the job is coming here every day and being able to appreciate and deal with students on a daily basis," he said.

He likes to think of himself as more than just a person of authority.



FRIENDLY GREETINGS Mr. Roach smiles at students as they enter school. At the beginning of the year, each student was given a comb as they entered.

PHOTO BY ANASTASIA MUSYAKEVICH

Though he often has to deal with students struggling with substance abuse, Mr. Roach aims to educate them on the consequences to help curb these addictions.

"Why would you try to punish someone for having an addiction when you could help them through counseling and or guidance?" Mr. Roach said.

Among his duties as a security guard is scanning students into the building. While he would stand and admit them, he noticed a pattern.

"I noticed these boys coming in with this hairstyle I call the 'shetland pony look,'" Mr. Roach said. "All the boys would use their fingers to comb their hair, everyday they would come through the door and fluff out their hair. When I went into the bathroom they were all lined up doing the same thing."

Although it is not an uncommon habit for teenagers to finger-comb their hair, Mr. Roach finds the look unnatural and unflattering.

"When I grew up you would not get caught dead without a comb in your back pocket," Mr. Roach said. "Combing your hair was a great todo. So I said, 'you know what? I'm going to start bringing some combs to school? I started buying them at

the dollar store pre-COVID."

At first, Mr. Roach noticed no one was taking the combs. Students were hesitant to grab anything he put out, so he didn't buy any more.

This year, however, Mr. Roach decided he wanted to give the combs another try. On the first day of school, Mr. Roach lined up the combs once again. Within the first month of school, he had already handed out 1,200 combs. Girls and boys would walk into the school and take combs. Soon, people were coming up to Mr. Roach, talking about how students were combing their hair in class.

This led more students to take combs, which in turn caused Mr. Roach to continue ordering them. People would frequently approach him and ask if he had any combs. Unfortunately, some students began misusing the combs. The combs started being thrown around and ending up on the ground, leading Mr. Roach to stop ordering more.

Although he no longer gives out combs, Mr. Roach hopes he has made an impact on students' lives.

"With 1,200 combs, that's 50% of our student population who took a comb," Mr. Roach said. "I just thought maybe we achieved something positive."



PHOTO BY ANASTASIA MUSYAKEVICH

MAKING A DIFFERENCE Mr. Roach spends time talking to students as they pass him in the A-wing hallway. Since retiring from the police department in 2000, he has worked in high schools as a security guard.

'Viva Las V-Show' highlights school talent

Arya Cham

Entertainment Writer

The annual V-Show preparations are ramping up as students involved are working hard in rehearsals to put on a show that encapsulates the Vegas variety show aesthetic. "Viva Las V-Show" aims to showcase a diversity of talent.

"V-Show is the variety show for the entirety of Maine South—anyone can participate," senior stage manager Mia Buchheister said. "It unifies the whole school."

"Viva Las V-Show" will feature acts from various clubs, such as dancing from Orchesis and Greek Club, singing from Vocal Jazz, and a game featuring audience interaction from Fashion Club. This allows audience members to see the talents of students from all different groups and interests.

"It's great that the V-Show helps bring to life all these different clubs and activities," senior student director Ryan Schoenstedt says. "I know that the V-Show will continue to be at Maine South because of the diversity that it brings."

V-Show draws student involvement not only through the acts, but with the Footlighters, who sing and dance at the beginning, the stage band, the music theory class, who transcribe music used in the show, and Trunk, who perform comedy sketches between each of the acts.

V-Show's annual performances have become an



5, 6, 7, 8 Seniors Naomi Nishi and Ella Cedeno lead Footlighters rehearsals. As student directors, they choreograph and teach the opening song and dance number.

integral part of school culture and a familiar event in the community.

"The V-Show has been a part of tradition since

the school opened," director Mr. Joseph Fitzpatrick said. "Being a community that values legacy as much as we do, it's important to keep that tradition alive."

This year's Vegas theme, voted on by the student directors, will be incorporated throughout the show in several ways.

"Vegas is all about performing, so there are a lot of cool acts that relate to the Vegas theme," senior Trunk head Meghan Magruder said. "The Footlighters opening video, which is set to Vegas songs like 'Poker Face' and 'Viva Las Vegas,' as well as other acts including singing numbers like 'Winner Takes It All,' will have fun choreography and lighting that will reflect the Vegas feel."

For students involved, V-Show is always a fun activity that allows them to feel connected to the school.

"You get to hang out with friends, learn dances, and be a part of something bigger than yourself," Schoenstedt said.

V-Show showcases the diverse talents of students throughout the building from a multitude of activities.

"Seeing all the amazing talent that we have here at Maine South makes you really proud to be a part of this school," Mr. Fitzpatrick said.

"Viva Las V-Show" will be performed on Dec. 6 and 7 at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium. Tickets can be purchased at the door.

'Monsters' is chilling but entertaining portrayal

Audrey Becker

Sports Editor



"Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story" - Netflix

The infamous 1989 Menendez brothers murder case and trial was recently adapted into a Netflix Original TV series: "Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story."

The entertaining 9-episode series gives a compelling and in-depth look into the context and motives of the murders, fostering many opinions on whether or not the Menendez brothers were in the wrong for what they did.

"Monsters" presents the story of how and why Erik Menendez, played by Cooper Koch, and Lyle Menendez, played by Nicholas Chavez, murdered their wealthy parents, José and Kitty Menendez, in their Beverly Hills home and how their lengthy and highly publicized trial played out.

The show examines the sexual abuse the brothers endured from their father and how that impacted their decision to murder their parents. These scenes throughout the show gave new



insight to the audience, which elicited greater sympathy towards the brothers and a renewed public interest in their conviction.

The show is mostly organized in chronological order but includes flashbacks of José and Kitty's interactions with the brothers to give context for their behaviors. It gives the full timeline of the murders, from when Erik and Lyle decided to murder their parents, up to when they were bussed off to serve their life sentences in prison.

"Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story" is the second edition of the true-crime series created by Ryan Murphy, the first of his being "Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story" in 2022. Both of these shows became Netflix hits that have provoked mixed opinions from the public—and for good reason.

The show is entertaining, with heartfelt, humorous, and horrifying moments alike. However, at times, it felt too similar to shows that are watched purely for amusement.

Through more dramatized scenes, it appears that the show values audience satisfaction and entertainment over an accurate portrayal. Depicting the chilling situation in a lighthearted and embellished way feels insensitive to the fact that this is a true story and is still affecting many lives.

Koch and Chavez are incredible actors, improving the quality of the show. Koch's extremely impressive performance in episode five, a 35-minute-long interview scene with no cuts, was a prime example of high-caliber acting. His performance was raw and emotional, and it allowed the viewers

to connect to Erik as a character.

Another factor that contributed to the high quality of the show was the attention to detail and realism. By recreating the genuine footage from the murder trial in the '90s, Koch and Chavez essentially transformed into Erik and Lyle. They embodied the same characteristics and mannerisms that the brothers had throughout their conviction process.

The humorous scenes starring Koch and Chavez were some of the most memorable and engaging, but the viewer is constantly aware that these people were capable of a horrific crime. It is unsettling to find yourself entertained by murders.

Portraying Erik and Lyle as human beings isn't the problem, it's making them too likable that shifts attention away from their major flaws and crimes they commit.

Despite the sometimes insensitive portrayal of this murder, the positive aspects of the show, including its captivating storytelling and impressive acting, make "Monsters" a binge-worthy show that deserves all of its recent praise.

THANK GOODNESS IT'S FRIED

Big Chicken

3 Tender Combo (\$12.98)

9437 W Higgins Rd., Rosemont, IL 60018



The chicken tenders at Big Chicken were simple and delicious. There was a good flavor to the batter of the fried chicken, as it was made with subtle seasoning and light spice that improved the taste. The chicken itself was also very tender. The Big Chicken sauce was reminiscent of the Chick-fil-A sauce, with a sweeter taste. The sauce was the perfect addition to the fries, which were relatively dry and crunchy and somewhat flavorless, so they greatly benefitted from the moisture of the sauce. This may be the most expensive of the six meals, but the portion size is very generous and it is the closest to Maine South.



Dave's Hot Chicken

2 Tenders with Fries (\$12.49)

2615 W North Ave., Melrose Park, IL 60160



The closest Dave's Hot Chicken may be 20 minutes away, but it's well worth the drive and the best chicken on this list. Despite just being two tenders, the tenders were large and served with a piece of toast and pickles in addition to the fries. The tenders were high quality—treading the fine line between being too dry or being oily. Even though "hot" is in the name of the restaurant, Dave's also offers mild spice levels. The mild flavor features seasoning and spice that make the chicken extra



flavorful without being spicy. The Dave's sauce just tasted like dijon mustard and garlic mix, but the pairing between the sauce and the chicken was perfect in both flavor and texture.

Chick-fil-A

Chick-n-Stripss 3 ct meal (\$10.15)

8575 W Golf Rd., Niles, IL 60714



Chick-fil-A chicken tenders taste like fast food—in a good way—with perfectly tender chicken and crispy breading. However, some of the tenders had excess clumps of fried batter on the tops and bottoms, which could make certain bites feel overly crunchy and dry. However, the waffle fries steal the show with the ideal fry to potato ratio: the outer layer of the fry is the perfect amount of crunch and the inside is the perfect amount of soft potato. The iconic Chick-fil-A sauce is the perfect mix of barbecue sauce, ranch and honey mustard, giving it a light yet distinctive taste that complements the chicken and fries. Chick-fil-A



is an easy and delicious place to satisfy fried chicken cravings—as long as it's not Sunday.

Fry Chicken 'n Fries

3 Tenders Combo (\$11.99)

8439 W Golf Rd., Niles, IL 60714



Fry Chicken 'n Fries chicken tenders were adequately tender, but bordered on a slightly chewy consistency. The breading was too crumbly and didn't stay on the chicken well, but the flavor of the breading itself was peppery with Middle Eastern influences. The fries were very thick and relatively mushy. The Santa Fe sauce had great flavor and was on the spicier side; it complemented both the chicken and the fries. The ranch-based garlic sauce was not quite as good—overpoweringly garlicky with a strong aftertaste. Fry Chicken



'n Fries is a solid place to check out if you're looking for fried chicken with a unique Middle Eastern flavor.

Fried chicken tenders are always the perfect quick meal after a football game with friends or on the road with family. *Southwords* decides once and for all which establishment's tenders meal is the best.

Sayde Feeley, Grace Halpert, Josie Hennes, Thomas Hurley, & Caitlin Vengazo

Entertainment Editors & Editors-In-Chief

Raising Cane's

3 Finger Combo (\$9.99)

6881 Dempster St., Morton Grove, IL 60053



The Cane's 3 Finger Combo is solid and the most affordable meal option among these six. The Cane's fries were extremely salty, and even slightly mushy at times—each bite of fry was hit or miss, as there was a decent variety in the quality level from fry to fry. The chicken itself is clearly not particularly high quality, as it's relatively oily and consistently has too much breading. It doesn't have a very noticeable seasoning or flavor other than "chicken." This being said, the famous Cane's sauce compliments the salty fries and does a spectacular job of making up for the shortcomings of the meal; It truly brings it together. Honestly, though, the Texas Toast is the star of the meal, a delightful balance of buttery and crunchy.



Popeyes

3 pc Classic Tenders Combo (\$10.59)

4142 N Harlem Ave., Norridge, IL 60706



Popeyes chicken breading is perfectly Southern in taste with a simultaneously sweet and peppery flavor. The meat itself, however, was a little bit dry, which slightly detracted from the taste. The biscuit served alongside the chicken and fries was delicious in both flavor and lightness, an appropriate complement to the meal. The flavor in the fries was almost identical to the sweet, peppery flavor in the chicken, which was initially tasty but began to feel repetitive, as every bite was the same exact flavor profile. The Popeyes meal was a perfectly adequate chicken tender meal, especially if you're in the mood for Cajun cuisine.



A Boogie showcases talent at Aragon

Emery Yates & Hayden Magad

Commentary Editors



A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie "Better Off Alone" Tour - Aragon Ballroom - Oct. 13

Rapper Julius Dubose, known professionally as A Boogie Wit da Hoodie, had an electric performance at the Aragon Ballroom on October 13 for the Chicago leg of his "Better Off Alone" Tour.

A Boogie had two openers and a starting MC, DJ Mike P, who hyped the crowd with classics like "Lucid Dreams" by Juice WRLD.

The first opener, The Artist from New Jersey, was a highlight. She had a soul-like vibe and a good vocal range.

She shares some similarities with popular R&B artist, SZA. While she had a slower vibe than you would expect at a rap concert, she was an incredible talent.

The second opener was up-and-coming rapper Stunna Gambino.

When he first came out, he had a miscommunication with his DJ and a delayed entrance. This was an omen for his set to come.

Gambino left much to be desired as his squeaky, auto-tuned voice made it hard to hear the lyrics.



BOOGIEING WITH A BOOGIE In a slower part of the concert, A Boogie sings an R&B style track titled, "February." Boogie has an eclectic discography with songs spanning various genres.

Both artists had very short sets, playing only three or four songs each.

A Boogie opened with his hit song "Jungle." He was assisted by his tour MC, DJ Ominaya.

His DJ provided great enthusiasm throughout the set and helped to keep the crowd energized.

He started off his set with some newer songs like "Timeless," while also mixing in older songs like "Me and My Guitar."

It was clear that A Boogie has a loyal fan base, as they knew every word to every song spanning all the way back to his first album.

His performance relied heavily on dramatic beat drops and flashing lights.

There were also tributes to fallen artists like Pop Smoke with his song "Hello," another Juice WRLD tribute with "Demons and Angels," and a PNB Rock tribute with his song "Loving."

It was clear that there were many Juice WRLD fans in the crowd, with those songs resonating most with the audience.

A Boogie showed that he has great respect for his fellow artists and truly wanted to honor them—not that he was doing it for show.

A Boogie also sang hit songs like "Look Back at It," "Swervin'," and "Secrets." These songs are among his most popular, making the crowd's energy even more electric.

As the energy rose, A Boogie got more involved with the crowd. He started to interact with and point out certain audience members.

However, nothing compared to when he played his final song "Drowning." After the first rendition, fans were screaming for an encore.

The whole show lasted about two hours. While the concert was short, it was well worth it. The concert had a great energy and A Boogie played numerous catchy throwbacks.

While the show was a fun and entertaining experience, A Boogie didn't push the boundaries of music or deliver a completely unique concert, which would have made for a more standout and riveting show.

Yung Gravy gets saucy on 'Grits & Gravy'

Sayde Feeley

Entertainment Editor



Yung Gravy "Grits and Gravy" Tour- Radius Chicago - October 10

Music artist Yung Gravy's recent concert at Radius Chicago on October 10 was a mix of lighthearted fun and an eclectic blend of music, making for an entertaining night despite a few shortcomings.

One of the standout aspects of the show was the live band accompanying Yung Gravy. Many rap or hip-hop artists rely heavily on pre-recorded beats, but Gravy's decision to include a live keyboardist and guitarist really set the tone for a more dynamic show.

The guitarist brought a rock-like intensity to several of his tracks, and the keyboardist provided a smooth, jazzy feel in parts. Both instruments rounded out the performance with a unique musicality that pushed Yung Gravy beyond typical hip-hop boundaries.

It was obvious that he isn't tethered to any single genre, blending elements of hip-hop, country, pop, and even some R&B into his set. While this alternating music style was certainly unique to hear, it was clear Yung Gravy excelled at certain

genres more than others and transitions were too abrupt.

The venue itself was well-suited for a concert, with high ceilings, a solid sound system, and easy entrance and exit points. However, for all the positives about the venue, one glaring issue was the size of the crowd—or lack thereof. The concert was far from sold out and the large space felt too empty. The crowd also lacked energy and there were noticeable stretches where the vibe felt flat. While Yung Gravy tried to engage the audience, the half-empty venue made it difficult to sustain the kind of electric atmosphere you'd expect from a concert.

However, Gravy did give a strong effort to interact with fans and keep them engaged. One memorable moment involved him handing out bottles of water for the audience to spray during a song, which injected some needed energy into the room. Additionally, he often spoke directly to fans, making the performance feel personalized and interactive.

The decision to make this an all-ages show was confusing, given the nature of the performance. Yung Gravy's lyrics and onstage banter were laced with profanity, and at times, the visuals displayed on the screen included images that were far from suitable for younger audiences. Given the mature themes and language, it was questionable whether this concert should have been advertised as appropriate for all ages. There were several parents with young kids in attendance, and labeling the show as "all-ages" felt misleading.



STEPPIN' ON THE BEAT Gravy

performs the song "Welcome to Chilis" toward the end of the show, accompanied by his guitarist and keyboardist.

Despite the questionable label and overwhelming turnout, the live band and Yung Gravy's signature humor still made for a decent concert. For fans of Gravy's unique style and playful stage presence, the night definitely offered memorable moments.

Private schools monopolize athletic talent



Hayden Magad

Commentary Editor

The by-laws of the IHSA guidelines state, "If you are solicited to enroll in or transfer to a school to participate in athletics, you are being illegally recruited and your eligibility is in jeopardy."

As any athlete who plays a sport at Maine South knows, this standard seems to only be held for public schools.

A public school like ours is only allowed to have athletes that live within the school district's boundaries.

Private schools, however, are held to an entirely different standard.

Anyone who pays tuition and lives within a 30-mile radius of a private school can go there.

This provides students and parents a wide range of options of schools that best fits their educational needs.

However, when it comes to athletics, private schools are still allowed

to compete against public schools, regardless of the advantage this could provide.

The IHSA guidelines state that blatantly waiving a student's tuition so that they will play at a given school is not allowed.

There is nothing stopping a donor, however, from providing the tuition for a given athlete in order for them to compete.

Even more, private schools also have the ability to provide academic scholarships for students.

What this does is give a disproportionate advantage to wealthy private schools that have the means to acquire better athletes.

Even more, they have the ability to recruit from more impoverished areas, possibly depleting those communities of their athletic talent.

Some examples of these schools happen to be Loyola Academy and Mount Carmel.

In the sport of football, it is some-

what of a momentous occasion when Mount Carmel loses.

They are loaded with some of the best coaches and players in the area and are tied with Joliet Catholic, another private school, with the most state championships in Illinois.

While we don't compete with Mount Carmel in football as they are in the 7A division, the point stands that public schools must compete with them for a state title.

Private schools have their own weaknesses, as Loyola football currently has two losses, but that does not change the fact they maintain an unfair advantage over any public school they compete against.

A more egregious example of this comes from the sport of wrestling.

Recently, Mount Carmel has dominated both the individual and team postseason tournaments with five team state championships and two in the last three years.

For the 2024 individual tournaments in the 3A division, they had

champions in two separate weight classes.

Considering the fact that Maine South just had their first wrestling state champion in over 50 years, the contrast is glaringly apparent.

There is a solution, however, that would clear up this issue.

This could begin with prohibiting private schools from competing for the same state title as public schools.

According to the Chicago Catholic League website, "Since the state football playoffs began, the Catholic League has produced 25 champions in five divisions and 10 runners-up in four divisions—a total of 35 state finalists in 39 years."

It is undeniable that private schools hold an advantage over public schools in athletic competition, a fact they seem to wear proudly on their chest. This should not hold any public school back from being the best they can be however.

We can compete with them to the best of our ability and show that money isn't everything.

Until something is done, however, wealthy private schools will continue to dominate high school sports.

"Anyone who pays tuition and lives within a 30-mile radius of a private school can go there."

Regular season success propels girls' swim into Sectionals

Brianna Giustino

Sports Editor

At the Highland Park National Interscholastic Swim Coaches Association meet on Oct. 19, the girls' swim and dive team walked away with four first place finishes, three second place finishes, and four third place finishes.

"This year's team showed more maturity and understanding concerning why we train the way we do throughout the season," Coach Donald Kura said. "It's not that we haven't practiced well in the past, but this season, for the most part, the girls have consistently taken it to another level that I have not often seen with the girls' team."

They also have an older team than in years prior with eleven seniors this season. With an older majority, the team has more experience swimming with each other, which has allowed them to create an encouraging and successful work ethic amongst the team.

"This is one of the most successful teams Maine South has had in its

history, and we have been preparing the whole season with plans to win Sectionals this year," senior Claire Petruso said. "A highlight from the season so far was dropping 30 seconds off of my 500-yard freestyle time, and cheering on my teammates when they get to accomplish the goals they've been working hard on."

Cheering on one another is important to the team and helps to keep them motivated during practices and meets. During practices, the team focuses on accomplishing both individual and group goals.

"We have several athletes that are standouts with regard to their work ethic and positive attitude—it's been a real team effort this fall," Coach Kura said. "This season has been to finish some unfinished business from last season, and to make sure that we are training and competing for each other every day."

Their determined attitudes are directly reflected in the team's early successes during their season. During the Prospect Invite on Sept. 21, junior Sarah Juris won four different events and completed her 50-yard freestyle



CATCHING AIR Freshman Hanna Dune breaks the water's surface to come up for air in the breast stroke event. Dune raced against Lane Tech, Taft, Highland Park, and West Chicago Community High School at the Highland Park Invite on Oct. 19.

in only 23.73 seconds. Her season has only gone up from there as she has consistently placed in the top two all season, and she announced her verbal commitment to The Ohio State University on Oct. 25.

"The team is looking forward to swimming our fastest and putting together our best set of 11 dives at the end of the season," Coach Kura said. "The hope is that if all of that comes

together that we can challenge for a Sectional Championship and possibly several All-State performances at the State Swim and Dive Meet in November."

The girls are looking forward to the remainder of their season leading up to Sectionals on Nov. 9.

"We've practiced hard all season with Sectionals as our top priority," senior Jenna Pearl said.

Girls' doubles team places 10th at State

Julia Van Roeyen

Sports Writer

The girls' tennis program saw historic success at Sectionals thanks to major contributions from underclassmen. Sophomore Emma Militaru and freshman Kristina Nikolova competed at State on Oct. 26 as a doubles team and placed 10th, the most successful result since 2015 for the team.

This was the latest in a string of successful performances, including first place finishes at both the Naperville North invite and Stagg invite.

Although the sport has increased in popularity in recent years, the number of senior players has had a large influence on the team dynamic.

"I feel like, as an upperclassman, specifically a senior, we're there to make sure all the underclassmen feel connected," senior Maddie Kron said. "We try to make everyone feel welcome and guide everyone that looks up to us to improve."

Junior Ella Raseta, one of the varsity captains, understands the importance of team building.

"I feel this position has given me the chance to get to know the younger players better and to develop a better relationship with all players on the team," said Raseta. "It is such an honor and I am so grateful for the opportunity to be a captain."

The upperclassmen create friendships with the younger players by fostering a welcoming environment.

"Some of my strongest and best friendships have been formed on this team, but have become stronger than ever this year," senior Gianna Musso said.

Despite being younger than some of their competition and teammates, the underclassmen of the team have produced successful results for the team.

The girls' tennis program has been blooming with interest and growing numbers over the past few years. This year's program has three teams: JV1, JV2 and Varsity. However, the JV teams are commonly advertised as one team in order to promote inclusivity as much as possible.

"Tennis is overall a very inclusive sport, and regardless of your skill level, we're all individuals who love the same sport," said Musso. "When we aren't competing, we all come together to do group activities and bonding as much as possible instead of doing things as segregated teams."

SERVES UP

Junior Ella Raseta tosses up a serve in her match against Lane Tech on Oct. 8. Raseta and her doubles partner Megi Stoyanova won this match.



PHOTO BY KATHERINE JOHNSTON

Boys' cross country working towards state meet success

Isla Craig Naples & Sophia Iniguez

Sports Writers

The Maine South boys' cross country team has five of their top athletes running sub-16 minute times in the three-mile race, an impressive feat.

As the season has progressed, the boys have continued to train relentlessly by running 8 to 10 miles at practice every day.

Although the varsity team ran well at the first meet, they faced some challenging injuries that have impacted their season greatly.

"All the seniors this year have been injured one time or another, and these injuries have caused us to either not be able to run at the meets or perform poorly," senior Owynn Garrels said.

Unfortunately, senior Jake Eckhart, a top varsity runner, suffered an injury early in the season and has yet to run in any meets. His fast times benefit the team, so losing him has been a challenge.

Coach Greg Nordahl's hopes are high for the future given the work ethic of this year's athletes.

"We have a really great group of sophomores that are really hard-working," Mr. Nordahl said. "A lot of them are running varsity, and so our goal is to get those guys ready for their junior and senior year."

As the class of 2027 begins to progress, Mr. Nordahl has high aspirations for the team excelling as a whole. Even though the team placed second to last at Conference, they earned third place at Regionals on Oct. 16. The impactful sophomores who ran in the varsity heat at Regionals and are expected to continue contributing to the team's success.

"I am looking for [the team] to be able to get down to the state meet this year," Coach Nordahl said.

The team must be strategic in their race plans



PHOTO BY MAEVE RAFFERTY

GOING THE DISTANCE

Senior Owynn Garrels chases down his competition at the CSL Conference Meet on Oct. 19. The team placed second to last, but Garrels took third place in the varsity race individually.

and workouts as they prepare for the long journey to State.

He uses grueling workouts to condition his athletes, such as 4x1 mile repeats on the track.

"They run four miles, they have about a three minute break in between each of the miles, and each of the miles are run at about 4:50 to 4:55," Coach Nordahl said.

Coach Nordahl clarifies that only top runners can complete this workout, Owynn Garrels being one of them.

Garrels is the number one runner on the team and has worked hard to be on varsity all four years.

"My goal is to achieve All-State honors and to run one of the fastest times in Maine South history in doing so," Garrels said.

As the season comes to a close, the boys are working harder than ever to achieve their goals of going down to State by pushing themselves and each other to be the best they can.

"Man, our sport is all about pushing, right?" Coach Nordahl said. "It's all about the grind."

Two golfers take on state tournament

James Biagi

Sports Writer

After a regular season full of success, seniors Adam Drabek and Jack Zone both qualified for the boys' golf state tournament.

The first day of State, Oct. 18, Zone shot a 39, three over par, on the front nine. On the back nine, he couldn't recover from a bad hole, which put his score over the cutoff for day two.

Drabek shot an 82, 10 over par, allowing him to play in the second round of the tournament.

On the second day, he shot a 76, placing him 47th in the state, and shooting 14 over par overall.

Drabek ended the regular season with a nine-hole average of 38 and an 18-hole average of 77. His best nine holes of the season, he shot a 33, three under par. Zone's best nine-hole score of the year was a 35.

Drabek strives to be the best player he can be. He practices consistently, but golf is still a mental game.

"With the good holes come the bad holes," said Drabek. "It happens to the best of us. You learn to improve and figure out what was the worst part of your game at that tournament, and you just go out and work on that."

For the past three years, Drabek has played on the varsity team and has held the top position there for two years. He qualified for State two times and shot a 73 at Sectionals.

"[Drabek] was the longest hitter at the State Championship," Coach Adam Kwiatkowski said. "His round was highlighted by driving two different 400-yard holes."

Zone also has been a solid player this year. He earned a medal at Regionals and shot his season best at Sectionals, qualifying him for State.

Despite not getting the results he wanted at State, Zone still enjoyed the experience overall.

"Being able to share a hotel room with my buddy and just the whole State experience was really fun," Zone said.

SPORTS

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CROSS COUNTRY | FLAG FOOTBALL | FOOTBALL | GOLF | BOYS' SOCCER | GIRLS' SWIM & DIVE | GIRLS' TENNIS | GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Girls' cross country hopeful for postseason meets

Sydney Hollingsworth

Sports Writer

The girls' cross country team placed third at both Conference and Regionals and has high hopes for the upcoming State series on Nov. 9.

To start the season off, the Hawks competed in the Warren Invite at the O'Plaine Campus on Sept. 21 and placed first, a major accomplishment for the team.

"This was the first invite championship we have had in all of our years in cross country," Coach Jeff Downing said.

Sticking together as a team and tapping into the team's chemistry has allowed the team to achieve more of their goals.

"Team bonding can play a big role in doing amazing things during the season," senior Sofia Arcuri said. "It is really important to implement bonding exercises into the schedule for girls' cross country."

Athlete spotlight: Aribella Spandiary honored by Chicago Bears

Katherine Johnston

Sports Writer

In their second season as a Maine South sport, girls' flag football proved to be one of the best programs in the state with a final record of 19-2. The swift ascent of the program, though, would not have been possible without the significant contributions of junior quarterback Aribella Spandiary.

With eight "Player of the Game" awards from the coach, Spandiary led the state with a total of 4,484 passing yards this season.

This success was recognized beyond the school walls as the Chicago Bears named her their Week 4 Girls Flag Player of the Week. The Bears honor Flag Football players in Illinois for their exceptional play, community involvement, and sportsmanship.

"It was completely unexpected and I was so grateful for the opportunity," Spandiary said.

Head Coach Carlos Panizo and a representative from the Bears Organization presented Spandiary with a custom football with her statistics from the season on it.

"I am extremely proud that she

On Oct. 19, the varsity team placed third at the CSL conference meet at Deerfield. Arcuri and sophomore Tessie Bradley were named All-Conference athletes, having placed in the top 14.

Undoubtedly, the team has had a lot of success this season, but this hasn't been without struggles. It is incredibly difficult to continuously win in cross country and stay healthy after the multitude of hours spent practicing. The team continues to train hard during practice, while also prioritizing safety in order to perform their best for the remainder of the season.

"Some of the lows have definitely been injuries," junior Lucia Fuentes said. "So far we've seen this season that a lot of times we have one of our top seven out from a race due to injury or sickness. Especially as it grows colder it gets harder to keep everyone in a healthy condition."

Ultimately, the team's goal is to make it to the State meet and compete for the



LEADING THE PACK

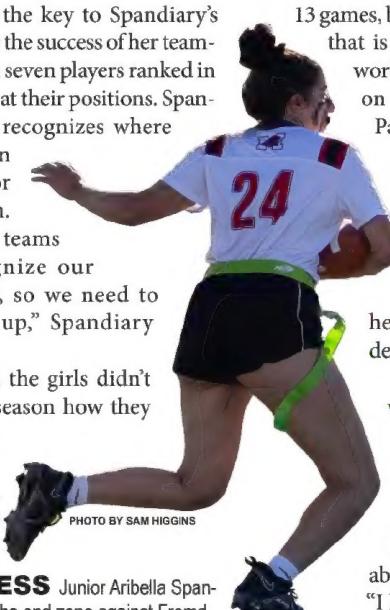
Sophomore Tessie Bradley runs towards the finish line at Deerfield High School at the CSL conference meet on Oct. 19. The Hawks took third place.

state title. Similar to previous conference meets, the team has had individuals qualify for State for the last three years. This is incredibly hard to do because it requires many hours of practice, consistency, and a healthy body.

"It is important to focus on the little things, make sure you stretch, and do any strength training that you need to do in order to stay healthy," Arcuri said. "Those things make a big difference."

In order to qualify for State, the team first has to run well and meet the State qualification at Sectionals. Then, if the team meets the State qualification at Sectionals on Nov. 2. Then, they will go on to run in the State meet in Peoria on Nov. 9.

"One of the greatest things about this team is that after the regular season, the post-season athletes stick around in the cold to really try and give it our all so we have a chance to make it down state," Fuentes said.



LIMITLESS

Junior Aribella Spandiary runs to the end zone against Fremd. Hawks won 28-2.

got the recognition that she so greatly deserved," Coach Panizo said.

Being recognized by the Bears organization has been a dream come true for Spandiary. She and the other players given this award will be honored during the Bears game on Dec. 22.

Part of the key to Spandiary's success was the success of her teammates, with seven players ranked in the top five at their positions. Spandiary also recognizes where the team can improve for next season.

"Other teams can recognize our plays now, so we need to change it up," Spandiary said.

Though the girls didn't finish the season how they wanted, they are still united.

"We are coming

back stronger" Spandiary said. "We know the competition, and we are learning from our mistakes."

Coach Panizo knew that this season was going to be tough and purposely made their schedule challenging.

"I would have been happy if we won 13 games, but seeing that we exceeded that is really a testament to the work that the players put in, on and off the field," Coach Panizo said.

As the quarterback, Spandiary is looked to for advice and to bring the team's morale up. Even if they are losing, she needs to keep her head up and throw confidently in order to win.

"We could lose to the worst team with a bad attitude," Spandiary said.

Growing up in a competitive, football-loving environment, Spandiary has always been passionate about the game.

"I have always had a football in my hand," Spandiary said.

Even though Spandiary is still a junior, she is looking to the future for her career in flag football. Starting off the first season at Maine South with such an impact on the sport has motivated Spandiary to play another season. She has even had some scouts ask her about continuing on this journey.

"It is a 60-40 chance that I do play in college, but I am slowly leaning towards the yes side more and more," Spandiary said.

Since being recognized by the Bears, Spandiary has been acknowledged by young players who view her as a role model.

"When I started playing flag football, there couldn't be more than 50 girls total, and now there are over 8,000 and it keeps on growing," Spandiary said.

Spandiary knows that there will be future Hawks joining the team with the interest in flag football rising. When new students come, she is excited to see what they will do with the team.

"I think they are going to be inspired to beat my record," Spandiary said. "You meet the right girls and they will fight to try to beat our team long after we graduate."

